8757

Jonah Thompson

THE Primitive Teſtimony Of the PEOPLE called QUAKERS:

TOGETHER WITH

EXHORTATIONS

To all thoſe, who are under that PROFESSION.

In the City of *Briſtol*,

To FAITHFULNESS therein.

By the MENS MEETING of the ſaid PEOPLE.

The SECOND EDITION.

BRISTOL:

Printed by SAM. FARLEY in *Wine-ſtreet*, 1732.

THE

Primitive Teſtimony

Of the PEOPLE called

QUAKERS, &c.

Dear Friends,

TO have right Sentiments of *God* the great Author of our Being, and of our Duty to him as Men and Chriſtians, and to believe, live and act accordingly, is without doubt a Matter of the greateſt Conſequence to us, reſpecting our Happineſs in this Life, and that Life which is to come. And as we fervently deſire that this Happineſs may be the

the Lot and Portion of all Mankind, and eſpecially thoſe who with us make Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, and of that holy Principle of *Grace* and *Truth* which *through Jeſus Chriſt*, is given to Mankind, for their Inſtruction, Help and Preſervation in the Things of *God*, and in the Way of Virtue and Godlineſs; we are at this Time concerned in that Love of God, which ſeeks the Good of All, to recommend a few neceſſary Things to your ſerious Conſideration; in order that both *Chriſtian* Knowledge and Practice may be maintained and increaſe among us, as a People, for the Good of our ſelves and our Poſterity after us.

In the firſt Place then (not to enter into the various Opinions of Men of nice Speculation and Curioſity, which have tended rather to perplex Peoples Minds, than to build them up in *Chriſtian* Knowledge) theſe are evidently right Sentiments of *God*, to believe him to be a *Being of infinite Purity and Goodneſs*, as well as *Wiſdom and Power*. And therefore in order that Mankind may be acceptable to him, 'tis neceſſary that they ſhould be pure alſo. And as it is evident that all Men

Men have, more or leſs, ſinn'd, and fallen ſhort of this State, in order to redeem them from it, and reſtore them to his Favour and Acceptance, 'tis neceſſary both that their *paſt Sins* ſhould be *remitted* and *forgiven*; and alſo that they ſhould be *waſhed*, *ſanctified* and *purified* from their Defilements, without which Men will never be made Partakers of *Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt*, and conſequently of Favour and Acceptance with *God*.

Now as theſe Things are all that Mankind wants, ſo *God* has provided *a Means* for both theſe Ends *(viz.) The Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe Name, and for whoſe Sake Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt is preached, and Reconciliation unto God promiſed*; and for *overcoming Sin in the Luſt of it*, and *purifying* and *ſanctifying* the hearts of men, *God*, through *Jeſus Chriſt*, offers to Mankind the *Help of his good Spirit*, as a *lively Principle* of *Virtue, Power and Efficacy*, for theſe good Purpoſes: So that *Chriſtianity* is in all Reſpects a *perfect Inſtitution*, compleatly anſwering all the Ends of Religion, which are the *Glory of God and the Happineſs of Mankind*. And therefore, in the Entrance of this

Ac. xiii. 38. *Rom.* iii. 24, 25.

1 *Jo.* ii. 13, 14.

Rom. v. 18.

this our Friendly Advice, we earneſtly recommend to you, that you have a *reverend Regard to the Chriſtian Doctrine* in every Part of it, and that you be humbly thankful to *God*, who in his Providence has caſt your Lot in ſuch an Age and Country, wherein the *Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt* is publickly and freely preached, and the Means of Salvation taught through him.

And inaſmuch as the Evidence of our holy Religion is ſuch, both from the real Excellency of it, as well as the *external Teſtimonies* concerning it, recorded in the *holy Scriptures*, which we have the greateſt Reaſon to believe, not only from the Credibility of the Hiſtory, (in which there is the compleateſt Evidence that can reaſonably be required of any Matters of Fact at ſo great Diſtance of Time) but alſo, from the *inward Teſtimony of the holy Spirit*, ſealing unto our Spirits the Truth of the Goſpel, in that bleſſed Experience of the good Fruits and Effects of it, which is witneſſed by all thoſe who ſincerely apply their Hearts to believe its Doctrines and obey its Precepts: We therefore caution you to be very watchful and careful how you admit any

any Doubts or Queſtionings concerning it, in giving way to ſome pernicious Notions, of late publiſhed to the world, leaſt the Sin of Unbelief, in Oppoſition to ſuch clear Evidence, ſhould be at laſt charged upon ſuch to their utter Confuſion and Condemnation. We requeſt you therefore that none be willingly ignorant or unbelieving, but that all apply themſelves, not only to believe the *great ſaving Truths* of the *Chriſtian Religion*, but put in Practice its pure and holy Precepts, which have the trueſt Tendency of any that were ever publiſhed to the World, to the perfecting human Nature, and rendering Mankind holy and happy.

Having ſaid thus much of the Chriſtian Doctrine and Precepts in general, we take the Liberty to put you in remembrance of ſome Particulars of our Belief and Practice agreeable thereto.

Firſt, We put you in mind of our ancient and conſtant Faith *in God the Father, and in Jeſus Chriſt his eternal Son the true God, and in the holy Spirit, one God bleſſed for ever more*; and that our Society always did and ſtill do, acknowledge *the*

Mat. xxviii. 19. 1 v. 20. *Ro.* ix. See *Act.*

2 *Tim.* iii. 16. 2 *Pet.* i. 20, 21. *the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament to be given by divine Inſpiration.* And we earneſtly exhort you ſtedfaſtly to maintain and keep the ſame Faith pure and inviolable. And by all means we pray you avoid the corrupt and pernicious Doctrines of *Deiſm* and *Infidelity*, which tend to Irreligion and a vicious ungodly Liberty; a Liberty not from Sin, but to Sin and Wickedneſs; a Liberty to pull down all Religion, and to ſet up none in the ſtead thereof, for ought that yet appears to the World, to the Shame and Scandal of all Religion, and even of human Wiſdom and Nature it ſelf.

Secondly, We put you in mind of our ſtedfaſt and conſtant Teſtimony to *the coming of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord in the Fleſh*, above ſeventeen hundred Years ago, according to the Chriſtian Account, when *he was conceived by the Power of the holy Ghoſt, and born of the Virgin Mary*, and after a Life in this World as Man, during the ſpace of about three and thirty Years, in the three laſt of which Years (which was the Time of his Miniſtry) *he wrought many real mighty Miracles*, liv'd a moſt exemplary Life, and taught a moſt

Jo. iv. 3. *att.* i. *uke* i. *cts* ii. *. Rom.* 19. *Pet.* ii.

a moſt heavenly Doctrine, *gave himſelf up to the ſhameful Death of the Croſs*, under *Pontius Pilate* the *Roman* Governor, then in *Judea*, and became a *moſt ſatisfactory Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*, upon Condition that Men ſincerely repent of their Sins and truly turn to the Lord, by forſaking them and amending and reforming their Lives, and receive him as *their Lord and Maſter*, ſubmitting themſelves to the Conduct of his *Light and* Spirit in their Minds and Conſciences; who *was buried and roſe again the third Day from the dead* by the Power of the Father, and appear'd oftentimes to his Diſciples after his Reſurrection, and gave them Commiſſion *to preach the Goſpel unto all Nations, baptizing them in, or into the Name* (that is Power and Virtue) *of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt*, as *Peter* did the firſt *Gentiles* which believed, who ſaid, *as I began to ſpeak the Holy Ghoſt fell on them, as on us at the Beginning*; *then*, ſaid he, *remembred I the Word of the Lord, how that he ſaid, John indeed baptized with Water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt: He aſcended into Heaven about forty Days after his Reſurrection*, and

Matt. 6, 7 C. *Heb.* xii 2. *Matt.* xxvii. 2. 1 *Jo.* ii. 2.

1 *Cor.* xv 3. 4. *Eph.* i. 20. *Acts* i. 3. *Matt.* xxviii. 19

Acts xi 15, 16.

Acts i. 2 3.

Eph. i. 20. *Ro.* viii. 34. *Pſalm* lxviii. 18 *Eph.* iv. 8. 1 *Theſ.* iv. 15, 16, 17. *Matt.* xxv. 31. 2 *Tim.* iv. 1. *Acts* xvii. 31. *Jo.* v. 28. 29.

and ſat down *at the Right Hand of God the Father, making Interceſſion for Men, and giving Gifts to them, yea to the rebellious alſo, that he by the ſanctifying Vertue of theſe Gifts* might prepare their Hearts for himſelf, *to dwell among them and in them* by his moſt *holy Spirit*: And *from Heaven he ſhall come to judge the living and the dead, in the great and general Day of Judgment, when all that are in the Graves ſhall hear his Voice and come forth, they that have done Good to the Reſurrection of Life* (Eternal) *and they that have done Evil to the Reſurrection of Damnation.* And all theſe Doctrines we profeſs according to *the plain litteral Senſe of the holy Scriptures*, which therefore we earneſtly exhort you ſtedfaſtly to believe, and zealouſly to maintain to the very End of your Lives, notwithſtanding all the Oppoſition and cunning Craftineſs of *Deiſts and Infidels* who lye in wait to deceive you, *Men of corrupt Minds, and reprobate, or of no Judgment, concerning the Faith.*

2 *Tim.* iii. 8.

Thirdly, We put you in mind, that our Friends from the Beginning, have conſtantly held, and maintain'd, that according

cording to the holy Scriptures, *Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, the Eternal Word, and Wiſdom of God, is the true Light* (called ſo, on account of his Divine Excellency) *who enlighteneth every Man that cometh into the World*, Jo. i. 9. with a Light or Gift, of his own Nature, *the Life in him being the Light of Men*, Jo. i. 4. and therefore ſuperiour to, and diſtinct from the mere human Light of our natural Faculties; becauſe it is no Conſtituent part of Men, as Creatures, but purely *the Gift of God* ſuperadded to them *by Jeſus Chriſt*, for their Information and Aſſiſtance, in Matters of Religion, regarding the Favour of God, and their Eternal Salvation.

And therefore believe them not, who tell you, there is no need of the *Grace*, or *Help* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to deliver you from the *Bondage*, and *Corruption* of your depraved and ſinful, becauſe fallen Nature; but that you are ſelf-ſufficient, or able of your ſelves, alone, to ſave your ſelves, without the Aſſiſtance of *Jeſus Chriſt* or his *Grace*; which Doctrine he, of his infinite Mercy, preſerve us all from, as being *inconſiſtent* with *Pſalms* lii. 7.

with, and *deſtructive* of true Religion; and teach both you and us, and all Men, to abſtract our Thoughts frequently, but eſpecially in our ſolemn Meetings, from all Worldly Things, and Earthly Ideas, to attend devoutly and ſincerely, on the Teaching and Guidance of this *heavenly Principle*, and *Gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt his beloved Son our Lord*, to know and witneſs his *bleſſed Work of Regeneration*; which none can know and witneſs without *him* and his *Help*, *mortifying our ſenſual and ſinful Appetites and Actions*, called in the Sacred Writings, *the Deeds of the Body*, *that we may live Eternally*, and raiſing in us heavenly Deſires, and bringing forth in us Holy Actions, ſince *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord*.

Jo. iii. 3.

Ro. viii. 13.

Heb. xii. 14.

And therefore we beſeech all thoſe who make Profeſſion with us, of the Excellency and Sufficiency of this *Divine Principle* and *ſalutary Grace*, which during the Time of God's kind Viſitations to the Souls of Men, is always near to them, to help them, by the Strength thereof to keep their Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of God, from

from wandering from it; in a ſtay'd State on God, eſpecially in our ſolemn Aſſemblies; for this *is worſhiping him in Spirit and Truth*, as our Saviour taught, *Jo.* iv. 23: This is the Way to have *our Hearts waſh'd from Wickedneſs*, Airyneſs and Wantonneſs, and inſtead thereof, to have *Chriſt formed in us*, Gal. iv. 19. and to be bleſs'd with thoſe Habits of Virtue and Piety, which are neceſſary for rendering us Children of God, and qualifying us for Heirs of Heaven. *Jer.* iv. 14.

Fourthly, We ſtir you up by way of Remembrance, that on our firſt becoming a Separate People, for the Service of God, from other Societies, our Primitive Friends were very Remarkable for their Uprightneſs, and Honeſty in Commerce and Converſe; they were very Exact in performing their Words and Promiſes, without ſhuffling and evaſive Excuſes, and inſincere Dealings, to the Credit and Reputation of the Society; much leſs did they by wheedling and deceitful Pretences, involve themſelves in a Multitude of Things and Affairs, which they had not Underſtanding

and

and Stock of their own to manage; and contract great Debts, which they knew they were not able to pay, and thereby impoſe upon, and cheat their honeſt Neighbours, under ſanctified Pretences of Religion and Holineſs; which Abomination we find our ſelves obliged to ſolemnly teſtify againſt.

And for your Preſervation from theſe evil and hurtful Snares, for time to come, we earneſtly exhort all who are in Trade and Buſineſs, to tread ſoftly therein, and not dip too deep in things they don't underſtand, and have not Stock of their own to manage, without hazarding other Mens Properties, to gratify their own Ambition and Covetouſneſs; but examine ſtrictly and juſtly into their Circumſtances, by making up, and truely ſtating their Accounts, Debtor and Creditor, at leaſt once a Year, and take care to live within their net Profit or Income; and if by any unforeſeen Accident they ſhall happen to be Reduced, and become uncapable to pay all their full and juſt Debts, that they immediately yield up their whole Effects to their Creditors, before their Affairs become too

deſ-

desperate, thereby giving Evidence to the World, of their honest and just Intentions, to satisfy their Creditors, to the utmost of their Power; which is most likely to raise a Reasonable Compassion in their Creditors, and preserve as much as possible their own Reputation, and that of the Society they profess themselves Members of.

Fifthly, Pray call to Mind the Temperance and Moderation of our Faithful Friends, who are gone before us; How they avoided Excess, in eating and drinking, in Gaiety of Apparel and Furniture; how peaceable and neighbourly they behaved, towards all Men, *speaking Evil of no Man, being no Brawlers, but gentle, shewing all Meekness unto all Men*; avoiding, as much as possible, all Occasions of Discord and Quarrels with their Friends and Fellow Citizens; not pettish and captious, heady and high minded, nor obstinate, stubborn and wilful, but patient and kind, *shewing forth out of a good Conversation, their Works with Meekness of Wisdom, to the Praises of him who had called them out of Darkness into his marvelous Light.* *Tit.* iii. 2. *Jam.* iii. 13. 1 *Pet.* 9.

We

We therefore ſeriouſly exhort all whom it may concern, to ſeek after theſe excellent Habits and Diſpoſitions of Mind, which are the beſt inward Ornaments of a Chriſtian; and with reſpect to outward adorning the Body, that you have a due Regard to the Admonitions, and Examples of Holy Men and Women, contained in Holy Writ, and our former Advice, and the Advices of the Yearly Meeting in *London*, relating thereunto, particularly that in the Year 1718; all which Advices are ſo evidently agreeable to that Moderation, and Self-Denial, which the *Chriſtian Religion* enjoyns, that not only our Society, and other Diſſenters, but the Church of *England* has expreſsly declared againſt Exceſs of Apparel, in an excellent Sermon, or Homily on that Subject, in the Book of Homilies, publiſhed at the Command of Queen *Elizabeth*, in the Year 1562, ratified by Convocation, and Parliament, and reprinted in the Year 1726; ſo that we have the Senſe of the Church of *England* in the Earlieſt Time, after the Reformation from *Popery*, with us, in this our Advice; And it is well known, that ſome of the moſt ſerious and religi-

ous

ous Members of that Church at this Day, and of other religious Societies, agree in Judgment with us therein, many of whom have commended the Decency and Modeſty of ſuch of our Friends Dreſs, who have kept within the Bounds of Plaineſs and Moderation; And we would take the Liberty to add, that that Extravagance in Apparel, which ſome are gone into, as it is contrary to the Example of holy Men and Women, in all Ages, ſo it is ſo far from being a Matter of Reputation to thoſe who are found in it, that it renders them contemptible even among thoſe who are in the ſame Practice themſelves; and they look upon ſuch as Perſons degenerated, and fallen from their firſt approved Principles and Practices: Upon all which Accounts, we requeſt you as you profeſs to be a ſelf-denying People, led by the *Spirit of Chriſt*, out of the *Vain Cuſtoms* and *Faſhions* of the World, that you ſhew forth the Power of that *Holy Principle*, by a Converſation every way agreeable thereunto.

Sixthly, We put you in Remembrance, that the ſame *Holy Principle* led our Forefathers into true Sincerity of Heart,

and as an Effect of that, *great Plainess of Speech*, using the same Form of Words without Distinction, to all alike (Viz.) *Thou* and *Thee* to one Person, and *You* or *Ye* to more than one; and as we think they had good Reason for so doing, we take the Liberty to advise you to follow their Example in this Respect, also. We cannot understand how one Form of Speech ought to be appropriated to the Rich, in Token of Respect, and for no other Reason but on Account of their Riches, and another to the Poor by way of Contempt, for their Poverty; when at the same time they use the same in their Addresses to the Almighty, which to one another is used in Contempt: Great Confusion! For which no Reason can be rendered but a Complyance with Custom, the Parent of many Evil, and hurtful things, and in this Case especially not to be followed, because this Practice of speaking to *one* in the *Plural* Number evidently took its Rise from Pride and Ambition in Heathen Princes, and Great Men of the World, and base servile Flattery in their Dependants, and is contrary to the Practice of Holy Men, recorded in the Scriptures (who all address'd them-

themſelves to Princes and Magiſtrates as well as others in the *Singular* Number) contrary to a great Part of the World at this Day (the Eaſtern Part of it having not degenerated into this ſervile Flattering way of Addreſs) contrary to the known Rules of Grammar, and tending to render the Uſe of Speech ambiguous, by deſtroying the Diſtinction of Numbers; and in all theſe Reſpects, contrary to that Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, which a right Chriſtian Converſation ought always to be attended with.

Add to this, the Cuſtom of *uncovering the Head* to one another in Token of Reſpect; which Practice the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* xi. 4. plainly implies to be one External Indication of Reverence towards God, and therefore adviſes to it in ſolemn Acts of Worſhip in Publick Aſſemblies; for which Reaſon chiefly, our Friends have thought it their Duty to forbear the Uſe of it towards mortal Men. We requeſt you therefore, that you will not depart from the known *approved Practices and Examples* of our Elders in theſe Particulars, that we may be *a People both of one Heart, and one Way, ſtriving* *Jerem.* xxxii. *Phil.* 27.

ing together for the Faith of the Goſpel, and a Practice agreeable thereunto.

Seventhly, Let the Publick Worſhip of God be performed with *great Gravity and Serioufneſs*, conſidering ourſelves in the *Preſence of God*, whom we ought moſt devoutly to fear and reverence; and
Gal. vi. 7. *who will not be mocked, for ſuch as we ſow, ſuch ſhall we reap.* And in an eſpecial manner we adviſe all, that they avoid at ſuch times, every the leaſt Appearance of *Airyneſs* and *Levity*, a Behaviour ſo very oppoſite to that ſolid weighty Frame of Spirit, which Perſons pretending to worſhip God ought to be found in; and to that Decency and good Order that ought to be obſerved on ſuch Occaſions; and ſo reproachful to thoſe who are at any time overtaken with it, and offenſive to all ſerious religious Perſons who may obſerve it; that we earneſtly adviſe all to watch diligently againſt it: And the Elders and Heads of Families we intreat to watch over their Children and Servants in this Reſpect. Alſo we intreat all duely to conſider, that as we, with other Chriſtians, have dedicated, or ſet apart the *firſt Day of the Week* for the Pub-

Publick Worſhip of God, we ought diligently at the Times appointed, to attend the ſame, both in the Morning and Afternoon, and not make Uſe of this Day, becauſe it is a Ceſſation from Worldly Buſineſs, to ride out for our Pleaſure, or to make Viſits, except on very ſpecial and neceſſary Occaſions which cannot be avoided, to the Neglect of the Publick Worſhip of God, to the diſregarding an Attendance on his Divine Majeſty in Publick Devotion; which certainly is very offenſive to him, as well as of Evil Example to our Neighbours; and is contrary to the Advice of the Author to the *Hebrews*, who charged the Chriſtians in his Time, *not to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together*; for ſuch Negligence hath a direct Tendency to provoke Almighty God to withdraw his Bleſſings from us; and thereby alſo we give great Occaſion of Scandal to Religion, and our own Society: And let our Week-Days Meetings be attended with due Regard; ſuffer not every ſlight Pretence of Worldly Buſineſs to occaſion our Abſence from them, but let us order our Affairs ſo, as much as poſſible, that we may not be deficient therein. *Heb.* x. 25.

And as to the Silence which we have frequently for a Part of the Time of our Meetings, the ſame is very neceſſary, in Order to *wait upon God* for *a due Preparation of Heart*, which is his Work, to worſhip him, and to ſpeak and hear with Steadineſs and a good Underſtanding, to our mutual Edification and Comfort, as well as for *Retroſpection*, *Recollection* and *Self-Examination*, to ſee how Matters ſtand between God and our own Souls, that we may be duly and ſincerely exerciſed in *mental* Prayer to him, for the Things we ſee, and feel we want, whether it be Deliverance from vain Thoughts, Pardon for Sin, or more Light and Underſtanding from him, to know his Will, and more Strength and Ability to do the ſame, in Order to mortify our evil and unruly Paſſions and irregular Actions, called by the Apoſtle *the Deeds of the Body*, that *we may live Soberly, Righteouſly and Godly in this World*, and be prepared *to Sup with him* here, on Bread and Wine from Heaven, (the ſame infinitely exceeding all Signs and Similitudes thereof) which he gives to his People who hunger and thirſt after the ſame, in their waiting truely on him,

o. viii.
it. ii. 12.
ev. iii.

and

and be qualified for the Enjoyment of Divine Bliſs and Eternal Life in the World which is to come, whenſoever God ſhall call us hence, and how ſoon that may be, the Youngeſt of us know not.

And this Way of *ſilent* or *ſpiritual Worſhip* is not only taught by *our Saviour*, and the Servants of God in the Sacred Writings, but was practiſed by the *Ancient Chriſtians*, as appears by the Labours and Search of that great Antiquary the late Dr. *Edward Stilling fleet*, afterwards Biſhop of *Worceſter*, in his *Origines Britanicæ*, or the *Antiquities of the Britiſh Churches*, Folio 223, 224, wherein he proves that a competent Part of the Time, appropriated for Divine Worſhip, was ſpent *in private*, *ſilent*, or *mental Prayer and Devotion*, each particular Perſon by himſelf, in their Publick Places of Worſhip.

Eighthly, We exhort our Younger Friends not to entangle their Affections one with another in Order to Marriage, without Conſent of Parents or Guardians, but to marry and ſettle themſelves

in the World as ſoon as is meet and convenient, with ſuch Conſent and Approbation ; for as on the one Hand there are great and deſtructive Miſchiefs commonly attend hafty unadviſed Proceedings in that great Affair, eſpecially where two Perſons are joyned in Marriage not of one Faith and Judgment in Religion, which generally proves a Foundation of a very miſerable Life, as well as is contrary to the known Rules of our Society ; ſo on the other Hand a married State entered into in the Fear and Counſel of God, with Conſent of Parents on both Sides, where two Perſons of *one Heart and one way in a religious Senſe*, as well as of agreeable natural Tempers and Diſpoſitions are joyned together in Marriage, ſuch become true Help-Meets in every Reſpect to each other ; and it is evident that there is nothing of all External Bleſſings which contributes more to the Happineſs of Life than ſuch a Conjunction ; and therefore though we would by no Means encourage any hafty unadviſed Proceedings in this weighty Affair of Marriage, yet we would alſo tenderly adviſe and caution all concerned, that they do not entertain any Prejudice a-

gainſt

gainſt that *honourable State*, but that they think of it, as it actually is, as an Ordinance of God, inſtituted by him for the Happineſs of Mankind. And we would alſo intreat you who are already entered into that State (and ſome of you Parents of Children) that you ſhew forth a good Example of tender Love and Affection, and of mutual Care and Regard one towards another, that the unmarried, by beholding your loving Converſation, and prudent Conduct towards each other as Man and Wife, may be induced to think favourably of that Relation. *Heb.* xiii. 4. 1 *Tim.* v. 14.

Ninthly, We would caution all who profeſs the pure Principle of Truth with us, to beware of Two great reigning Evils, which at this Time are become very common in this Nation; which are *Exceſſive Drinking*, *and the Practice of Gaming*. The firſt of theſe deprives Men of their Reaſon, that excellent Faculty, by which Men are diſtinguiſhed from Brutes, and ſuperiour to 'em; the laſt depraves our Reaſon, and all the Powers and Faculties of the Mind, to that Degree, as to render them in a great Meaſure uſeleſs; for it is evident, that who-

whoever is under the Power, and in the Practice of Gaming, their Minds are generally ſo enſnared by it, as to be unfit for any laudable uſeful Undertaking relating to the Things of this Life; much leſs are they in a Capacity to attend the Duties of Religion and Godlineſs, or have any true Reliſh of thoſe Divine Comforts which they are Witneſſes of, who are rightly exerciſed therein. The like great Inconveniences attend the being preſent at *Comedies*, and *Interludes* of all Kinds, and reading ungodly irreligious Books; ſuch as *Plays*, *Novels*, *Romances*, &c. by which the tender Minds of the Youth eſpecially, are greatly vitiated, and drawn out from that Religious Care and Watchfulneſs, in which their true Safety alone conſiſts, and leavened into the Spirit of this World, and the wanton laſcivious Pleaſures and Gayeties of it, which are utterly inconſiſtent with the ſober, chaſte, ſelf-denying Life of a Chriſtian. We therefore exhort all, not only that you be not actually exerciſed in theſe *unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*; but that you have *no Fellowſhip* with them, or thoſe that are concerned in 'em, but rather, if at any Time they fall in your Way, that you *reprove them*. Call

Eph. v. 11.

Call to Remembrance, we beſeech you, the many Miſchiefs, which often have accompanied that unnatural Sin of Drunkenneſs, even Murther itſelf (which has alſo ſometimes been the Conſequence of Gaming, as is well known) as well as that in its Nature and Tendency, Drunkeneſs deſtroys the Health, and has ſhortned the Lives of many, and is very ſtrictly forbidden in the Sacred Writings; avoid therefore all Occaſions which may lead inſenſibly to this great Evil; ſuch as the unneceſſary frequenting of Alehouſes and Taverns, according to our former Advice. But if any contrary to this our tender Advice, and contrary to their Duty as Men and Chriſtians, ſhould fall into this Practice, and continue in it, as thereby without true and unfeigned Repentance, and forſaking, they ſhut themſelves out of a Part in the Kingdom of God; ſo we think ourſelves obliged to declare, that we ſolemnly diſown and teſtify againſt them.

Tenthly, For rendering theſe Advices more Effectual, we entreat the Elders of the Church, both Miniſters and others, and Heads of Families in their ſeveral Places,

Places, that they take care to be good Examples in the conſtant Practice of the ſeveral Branches of our Chriſtian Teſtimony before-mentioned, and in all manner of good Converſation; for it is in Vain to recommend that to others which we do not Practice ourſelves; and therefore in the Words of the Apoſtle, let us Exhort one another, *take Heed to your ſelves* in the firſt Place, *and* then *to the Flock*, leaſt, beſides the Wound that we bring on our own Conſciences, we become likewiſe Partakers of other Mens Sins, to which, by our Evil Example, they may be encouraged. Whereas on the Contrary, ſuch Elders as are by the Grace of God, preſerved in a good Degree from Evil, may with better Aſſurance of Succeſs, adviſe and exhort others where it may be neceſſary; But let be remembered at the ſame time, that all Endeavours of this Kind ought to have for their principal Motive the Love of God. *Let all your Works be done with Charity* (that is Love) which when it ariſes out of a pure Heart, has always a wonderful and powerful Reach in it, to the bringing about thoſe good Ends for which it is deſign'd; and we think it will

Acts xx. 8.

will be very helpful for the Preſervation of our Youth, if the Elder Friends keep them as near to them as is convenient, and converſe with them with a prudent Freedom, making their Company both eaſy and inſtructive to 'em; by which Means they will have the better Opportunity to obſerve wherein their Advice may be neceſſary, and when thus Adminiſtred will make the deeper Impreſſion for their Good.

The Miniſters alſo we take Liberty to adviſe, in the Words of the Apoſtle, *Tit.* ii. 1, 7, and 8 Verſes, *That they ſpeak the Things that become ſound Doctrine, in all Things ſhewing themſelves Patterns of good Works, in Doctrine ſhewing Uncorruptneſs, Gravity, Sincerity, ſound Speech that cannot be condemned*; thus they will be qualified to Speak, Exhort, and Rebuke alſo with Authority, and without being deſpiſed. And in an Eſpecial Manner, we requeſt 'em to preſerve a true Unity of Spirit among themſelves, and a good Underſtanding with the Church in General; that all ſpeak the ſame Things, as they will do, if they abide under the Government of that Spirit

Spirit of Wiſdom, by which all true Miniſters are called and qualified for that Work. The preſerving this Unity of Spirit, and good Underſtanding with the Church, is ſo much the more neceſſary, becauſe tho' we do not as ſome others, eſteem the Call of the Church requiſite for the conſtituting a Miniſter, yet when any Eſteem themſelves Called of God to that Work, they ought ſo to behave themſelves in it, as to obtain the Churches Approbation by way of Certificate, when Occaſion requires it; which thoſe will never want, who in the Exa *Tim.* ii. 15. erciſe of their Miniſtry *ſtudy to approve themſelves unto God, Workmen that need not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* And as this is an approved Practice among us, grounded on very good and ſubſtantial Reaſons, ſo we deſire all concerned, to have due Regard thereto, that none take upon them to Travel as Miniſters without the Churches Approbation, ſignified by Cirtificate: And as a ſound and living Miniſtry, under the Influence and Conduct of the Divine Spirit, is a great Bleſſing to the Church, ſo we beſeech and exhort all who are truly Called and ſent of God by his

his Spirit, *to work as Miniſters in his Vineyard, to mind their Calling without being overmuch incumbred with the things of this Life*; In order to their attending duely on God for all neceſſary Qualifications, meet for ſo ſolemn a Vocation; and that they behave therein with Gravity, and a becoming Mein, ready to learn and be adviſed, *as well as apt to teach*; *meekly receiving Inſtruction, and inſtructing others in a Spirit of Wiſdom, Love and Humility, not as Lords over God's Heritage, but as Examples* of Lowlineſs of Mind, and Purity of Life *to the Flock, walking wiſely and inoffenſively, both in the Church and among all Men.*

Luk. x. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 4. 2 Tim. ii. 25. 1 Pet. v. 3.

Laſtly, The Sum of what has been, or may be ſaid, relating to a Chriſtian Practice and Converſation, may be reduced to this, That tho' there are many Branches, and different Kinds of Evil, yet they are all comprehended in theſe Two, (Viz.) There are ſome Things which are manifeſtly and evidently Evil, in which all agree as to their real Turpitude, or Defilement, ſuch as the Apoſtle ſpeaking of, calls *the Works of the Fleſh*, and tells us *they are manifeſt, which are theſe, Adul-*

Gal. v. 19, 20, 2

Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Varience, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like; of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in Time paſt, that they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And as theſe are manifeſt, there is the leſs Need to labour to convince any of the Evil of them; For the Witneſs of God in all Conſciences, teſtifies againſt Men whilſt in theſe Practices; and therefore we can only in the Love of God, warn all ſuch, that they do not continue to kick againſt theſe ſecret Pricks, but that they turn at the Reproofs of Wiſdom, whilſt ſhe is calling to 'em, and ſtriving with 'em, leaſt the Time come *when they may call and not be heard*, which is a moſt miſerable and irrecoverable State. But there are other Actions which are not ſo manifeſt as to their Evil, or Impurity, and ſome of them, perhaps, not ſo directly Evil in themſelves, as the Occaſions of Evil. Theſe at firſt View not ſo evidently appearing, as to their dangerous or hurtful Tendency, the Mind is therefore the more eaſily taken

Prov. i. 28. *Mic.* iii. 4.

taken Captive and enſnared by them, than by the more groſs and notorious Evils; for being thus by Degrees drawn out from that conſtant State of Watchfulneſs, in which its ſafety conſiſts, becomes more and more delighted with them, and at laſt is brought under Bondage by 'em; and having thereby loſt its Strength, becomes many Times expoſed to thoſe groſſer Evils, to which it once had an Abhorrence: So that thoſe things which at firſt were but ſmall in Appearance, have become the Occaſions at laſt of great and ruinous Evils.

Of this kind are the inordinate Love and purſuit of Riches, and the Things of this World; which being ſought within due Bounds, for the comfortable Subſiſtence of our ſelves and Families, and the Charitable Relief of others in Neceſſity, 'tis not only lawful, but commendable; but when the Mind is carried away with the Love of theſe things ſo as to be ſwallowed up with them, they then become (even tho' Men do not tranſgreſs the Bounds of Juſtice) a Clogg and Hinderance in its Attendance on the Duties of Religion; And this is an Exceſs which

by all Means ought to be avoided; and *is that Love* of *Money* which the Apoſtle calls, *the Root of all Evil*; and the coveting after and purſuing of it in this Manner and Degree, is what often *drowns Men in Deſtruction and Perdition*; the Thoughts of ſuch being ſo ingroſſed with it, as to forget and neglect *the moſt neceſſary Part*, (Viz.) the great Buſineſs of Religion and Salvation, &c.

1 *Tim.* vi. 9, 10.

Of this Kind alſo is the Purſuit of the Pleaſures and Vanities of this World. This being the Dangerous Bait which too often takes the Youth, as the Former does thoſe of more advanc'd Age; And therefore the Apoſtle *Paul* adviſes to *flee Youthful Luſts*; and the Apoſtle *Peter*, to *abſtain from Fleſhly Luſts which War againſt the Soul.*

2 *Tim.* ii. 22. 1 *Pet.* ii. 11.

Of this Kind alſo, is a Conformity to the Ceremonious Part of Converſation, the *giving flattering Titles*, uſing Superfluity of Words, and *having Mens Perſons in Admiration for Advantge*, contrary to that Simplicity and Godly Sincerity which a true Chriſtian always ought to be found in towards all Men. For where

Job xxxii. 21, 22. *Jud.* xvi.

Sin-

Sincerity of Heart, and *Truth in the inward Parts* is, there it will appear in an honeſt, plain, yet modeſt, humble Behaviour; on the one Hand, free from baſe ſervile Flattery, or Compliance with the modiſh Forms of Addreſs, unbecoming that brave Chriſtian Liberty unto which we are called; And on the other Hand, uſing this Liberty within the Bounds of Decency, Modeſty, and Humility, with a due Regard to the ſeveral Relations we are under, as Servants towards Maſters, Children towards Parents, Subjects towards the King, and all in Authority, paying all due Obedience in every thing which is not contrary to a good Conſcience: And where it is ſo, bearing patiently with a Chriſtian Spirit, what Sufferings may be inflicted on us, for Conſcience ſake. *Pſalm* li. 6.

To conclude, As the Bounds and Limits of our Duty in the ſeveral Branches before-mentioned, and others which might be mentioned, conſiſts in a middle Path, between two Extreams, both which ought carefully to be avoided; ſo it is moſt neceſſary and we therefore earneſtly recommend it to all concerned,

that they keep a diligent, conſtant and careful Watch, over their Hearts in the firſt Place, and ſee what they are moſt drawn after; *keep your Hearts with all Diligence, for out of them are* not only *the Iſſues of Life*, but as they are naturally deceitful, the Iſſues of Death too; *for all Evil has its Conception there, and proceeds thence*; and if this Watch over our Hearts, and the outgoings of our Minds be rightly kept, there will be the leſs Danger of Errors in Converſation, on the Right Hand, or on the left. But as the *middle Path* between the two Extreams is ſometimes a very narrow one, and conſequently not very eaſily manifeſt or diſcernable without due Watchfulneſs; therefore we repeat it as our Advice, that you *be not ſlothful in* this moſt neceſſary *Buſineſs, but fervent in Spirit ſerving the Lord*; And he is beſt ſerved by keeping our ſelves clean from the Pollutions and Defilements that are in the World, in every Degree of 'em, and by loving and ſerving one another, which is certainly our indiſpenſible Duty as Chriſtians, becauſe therein we truely imitate Chriſt.

Prov. iv. 23.

Matt. xv. 19.

Rom. xii. 11.

Let

Let not (we beſeech you) this Complaint be juſtly taken up againſt us, which the Apoſtle expreſſed againſt ſome in his Time, (Viz.) *All ſeek their own things, and not the things which are Jeſus Chriſt's.* Phil. ii. 21. But let us conſider that tho' Diligence in the Affairs and Buſineſs of this Life, within due Bounds, is neceſſary and commendable; yet a diligent Care and Watchfulneſs reſpecting the Salvation of our immortal Part, is by ſo much the more neceſſary and commendable, as the Soul is of infinitely more Value than the Body; and as we would not diſcourage the former, ſo we would encourage and provoke you, in the moſt affectionate Manner to the latter. And in order to it, *to you* that are Maſters of Families, we would take the Liberty to write more eſpecially, that you watch over them in Love, to root out and deſtroy as much as in you lie, all Evil Seeds and Productions of what kind ſoever, in their firſt and earlieſt Appearance, when your Endeavours of this kind are moſt likely to prove ſucceſsful: And on the other hand, to cheriſh and encourage every Appearance of Good, whenever it comes under your Notice or

Ob-

Obſervation. And for this Purpoſe, that you ſet apart Times and Seaſons for ſome Religious Converſe with them, by reading to them ſome ſuitable Parts of the Holy Scriptures, and from thence taking Occaſion to adviſe them relating to Chriſtian Knowledge and Practice, as you may find your ſelves, in the Wiſdom of God, drawn thereunto. This we confeſs is a Matter of ſome conſiderable Care and Labour of Mind; and tho' it be ſo, we cannot avoid thinking it your indiſpenſible Duty, much more than the careful Proviſion for their Bodies, inaſmuch as the Welfare of the one is of infinitely more Value than that of the other: And therefore we recommend unto you ſuch a Religious Induſtry, for the Spiritual and Eternal Good of your Children and Families, which we fear is too much wanting.

Acts xx. 32. *And now Brethren we commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an* Act. xxvi. 18. *Inheritance among all them which are ſanctified, through Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Publiſh'd

Publiſh'd at our Men's Meeting in the City of *BRISTOL*, the 3d of the 11th Month, 1731. And at their Appointment, ſign'd on their Behalf by

ALEX. ARSCOTT.

FINIS.

299615